Urology

Urology is a surgical specialty dealing with diseases of the male and female urinary tract and the male reproductive organs. Urology combines the management of medical (i.e., non-surgical) conditions such as urinary tract infections and benign prostatic hyperplasia, with the management of surgical conditions such as bladder or prostate cancer, kidney stones, congenital abnormalities, traumatic injury and stress incontinence.

Although urology is classified as a surgical specialty, knowledge of internal medicine, pediatrics, gynecology, and other specialties by the urologist is required because of the wide variety of medical conditions treated. In recognition of this vast scope of knowledge, the American Urological Association has identified seven urologic subspecialty areas:

1. Female Urology
2. Male Infertility
3. Neurourology
4. Pediatric Urology
5. Renal Transplantation
6. Urinary tract stones
7. Urologic Oncology

Urologist

The AUA defines a urologist as a physician who is trained to diagnose and treat diseases of the male reproductive organs as well as the male and female urinary tracts. In addition, urologists treat many types of diseases including testicular, bladder, kidney and prostate cancer and commonly perform surgery on prostate cancer patients.

Education and Training Requirements

Urologists must complete four years of medical school, then two years of training in general surgery, followed by a three-year training period in urology and urologic surgery and an 18-month period of clinical practice before taking specialty board examinations.

The AUA considers the minimum qualifications of a urologist to be:

- Graduation from an acceptable medical school with receipt of a Doctor of Medicine degree or an equivalent degree
- Possession of an unlimited license to practice medicine and surgery in the state, province or country of residence
- Postgraduate training in hospitals approved by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations or its equivalent, and approved by a Residency Review Committee for Urology or its equivalent
- Limitation of practice to the specialty of urology
- Certification or a candidate for certification by the American Board of Urology, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the Quebec Board of Urology or the appropriate certifying entity in the country where the applicant is practicing
Common Conditions Treated by Urologists

- Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) or enlarged prostate
- Cancers of the urinary tract (such as kidney cancer, bladder cancer, prostate cancer and testicular cancer)
- Infertility in women or men
- Interstitial cystitis
- Kidney stones
- Urinary incontinence; overactive bladder
- Prostatitis
- Sexual dysfunction (such as erectile dysfunction)
- Urinary tract infections

When to See a Urologist?

You should consult a urologist if you experience the following symptoms:

- Discomfort while urinating
- A sense of difficulty completely emptying the bladder
- Poor bladder control, including urine leakage
- Appearance of blood in the urine
- The sensation of pain appearing to be related to one of the structures of the urinary tract
- Problems with sexual function
- Difficulties conceiving a child

Common Procedures Urologists Perform

Common procedures performed by urologists in an office setting:

- Cystoscopy (visual scope inspection of the urethra and bladder (and prostate in men)
- Vasectomy (permanent male birth control)
- In-office treatments for BPH

Common Procedures/Surgeries Performed in an Operating Room Setting:

- Removal of the kidney or prostate due to cancer
- Transurethral surgeries for BPH and bladder tumors
- Removal of kidney/ureteral stones using shockwave-generating machines or lasers
- Anti-incontinence surgeries for both men and women

Urologists also perform vasectomy reversals and placement of penile prostheses.